



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Devon and Cornwall Police's response to the funding challenge

July 2013

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Devon and Cornwall Police: Executive summary

Devon and Cornwall Police faces a significant challenge. It has lower than average funding, had to make savings prior to the spending review period and so will struggle to protect the frontline compared with other forces. While overall crime levels are low, the force is challenged by a large geographic area to police and, as reported by the force, has significant increases in the population over the summer months (from 1.7m to around 11m).

Last year, HMIC reported that the force was at risk of not delivering an efficient and effective police service to the public. Since then the force has taken a firmer grip on its change programme, altered structures that were not delivering for the public and improved performance. There is still work to do, but the force is in a much stronger position to manage further spending reductions.

Financial challenge

Devon and Cornwall Police has identified that it needs to save £53.5m over the four years of the spending review (i.e. between March 2011 and March 2015). As a proportion of its overall budget (17%) this savings requirement is broadly in line with most other forces, however, HMIC considers that Devon and Cornwall Police faces a difficult challenge. This is because Devon and Cornwall is already a low spending in comparison to most other forces; it has a lower number of staff so has a comparatively lower pay bill; and the amount it spends on each officer and staff member is also lower than most other forces.

Progress in making savings

The force has planned how it will save all of the £53.5m it needs by 2015. The force will have a balanced budget in each remaining year of this spending review period and will not have to rely on the use of its reserves¹.

Changes to the workforce

All forces spend most of their money on staff costs (such as wages and overtime), and so have focused on reducing this expenditure in order to cut costs.² Devon and Cornwall Police is no exception.

It is reducing police officer numbers by limiting recruitment and holding vacancies, as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it plans to have 466 fewer police officers in the force. This means the number of police officers is planned to reduce by 13% between March 2010³ and March 2015; this is a greater reduction than most other forces.

¹ Reserves are funds often used to pay for unforeseen events and balance liabilities.

² See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

³ We use 2010 as our baseline as many forces started to make staff reductions in anticipation of the spending review.

Devon and Cornwall Police plans to broadly protect frontline posts as it makes these cuts: between March 2010 and March 2015, the proportion of police officers in frontline crime-fighting roles is planned to remain the same at 93%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.

The force has also made some police staff redundant and not replaced others as they have left (e.g. through retirements and resignations); and as a result, by the end of the spending review period, it is planned that there will be 332 fewer police staff in the force. This means the number of police staff is planned to reduce by 16% between March 2010 and March 2015; this is broadly in line with most other forces. Devon and Cornwall Police plans to decrease the number of police community support officers (PCSOs) by less than 1%; which is fewer than most other forces.

Impact on the public

HMIC expects forces to make savings without damaging the service provided to the public. We monitor whether they are achieving this by examining crime rates and the results of the victim satisfaction surveys which all forces conduct.

Over the first two years of the spending review, recorded crime⁴ (excluding fraud) fell by 2%, which is considerably less than the figure for England and Wales (13%). Victim satisfaction remains high at 84.4%⁵ which is broadly in line with other forces.

Future challenges

Devon and Cornwall Police has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime. It has tackled some issues arising from the restructure, which has allowed it to better manage performance. In addition, the force has assessed future savings requirements and is starting to plan savings to 2016/17.

4 Crime excluding fraud, as per the new crime classifications released in July 2013 by the Office for National Statistics.

5 \pm 1.6%.

The challenge

Over the four years of the spending review (March 2011 to March 2015), Devon and Cornwall Police identified that it needed to find savings of £53.5m, which equates to 17% of its total expenditure⁶ (which in 2012/13 was £294.7m). Across England and Wales a 17% reduction in total expenditure is required.

Progress in making savings: Years 1–2

The force successfully made 66% (£35.6m) of the total savings required by March 2015 in the first two years of the spending review period. It achieved this by: not recruiting any new police officers; reducing the number of police staff it employs (which it started to do in 2010); restructuring how the force delivers some policing services through a new operating model, which has since evolved, and changing police officer roles in business support into police staff roles.

Plans for Year 3–4

The force has plans in place to achieve further savings of £10.3m in 2013/14, and another £7.6m in 2014/15. This leaves no funding gap at the end of the spending review period. These savings will be delivered by continuing to lose police officers and staff and reviewing the force's non-pay costs, for example, printing, ICT and transport costs. The force will find it harder to make additional savings from its already low non-staff expenditure.

Looking beyond the current spending review

The force has started to consider what savings it might need to make after March 2015. The force's medium-term financial plan looks forward to 2015/16.

The scale of the challenge in Devon and Cornwall

The amount of money Devon and Cornwall Police has to save is broadly in line with other forces however, it faces a particular challenge because:

- it has a lower number of police officers per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales;
- it is already a low cost force as it spends less on policing per head of population than most other forces in England and Wales; and
- the cost of police officers and police staff per head is lower than most other forces in England and Wales.

⁶ Based on a gross expenditure baseline in 2010/11.

Demand

Forces face different levels of demand for the service they provide to the public. This section looks at three of the key indicators of demand to provide an overall impression of the challenges each force faces:

- the number of calls the force receives from the public;
- the number of crimes the force deals with;
- the number of prosecutions (suspects charged with offences) the force brings.

12 months to March 2013	Devon and Cornwall Police	England and Wales
Emergency and priority calls per 1,000 population	99	134
Victim-based crime per 1,000 population	43.2	54.5
Prosecutions (charges) per 1,000 population	7.3	10.2

This table shows that, in 2012/13, Devon and Cornwall Police received fewer emergency and priority calls from the public. It had to deal with fewer crimes per head of population, and it had to support fewer prosecutions.

How difficult is the challenge?

Devon and Cornwall faces a more difficult challenge as it is a low cost force and had even before the current spending review deliver significant savings and cost reductions. In addition, it has an extensive geographic area to police and large numbers of people visit the area in the summer months, generating increased demand on the police service.

Response to the challenge

Forces deliver their response to the savings requirement through a change programme. Because over 80% of a police budget (on average) is spent on staff costs,⁷ it is not surprising that the change programmes of forces across England and Wales, plan to achieve most of their savings by reducing the number of police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs) and police staff employed.

Devon and Cornwall Police is no exception. It made an early start on this in 2010, when it slowed its recruitment of new police officers and police staff, and reduced the number of police staff. The force plans to make 74% of its spending review savings requirement from its pay budget. This is similar to most other forces, showing the force is bearing down on both pay and on the costs of goods and services.

Changes to workforce numbers

The following table shows the force's planned changes to workforce numbers over the spending review period, and compares these to the change for England and Wales.⁸

	31 March 2010 (baseline)	31 March 2015	Change	Devon and Cornwall change %	Change for England and Wales %
Police Officers	3,556	3,090	-466	-13%	-11%
Police Staff	2,071	1,739	-332	-16%	-16%
PCSOs	363	360	-3	-1%	-17%
Total	5,990	5,189	-801	-13%	-13%
Specials	592	700	+108	+18%	+60%

Overall, the table shows that Devon and Cornwall Police plans to lose slightly more officers than in other forces. However, around the same proportion of police staff is expected to be lost but there is a much smaller planned reduction in the number of PCSOs than is expected for England and Wales overall.

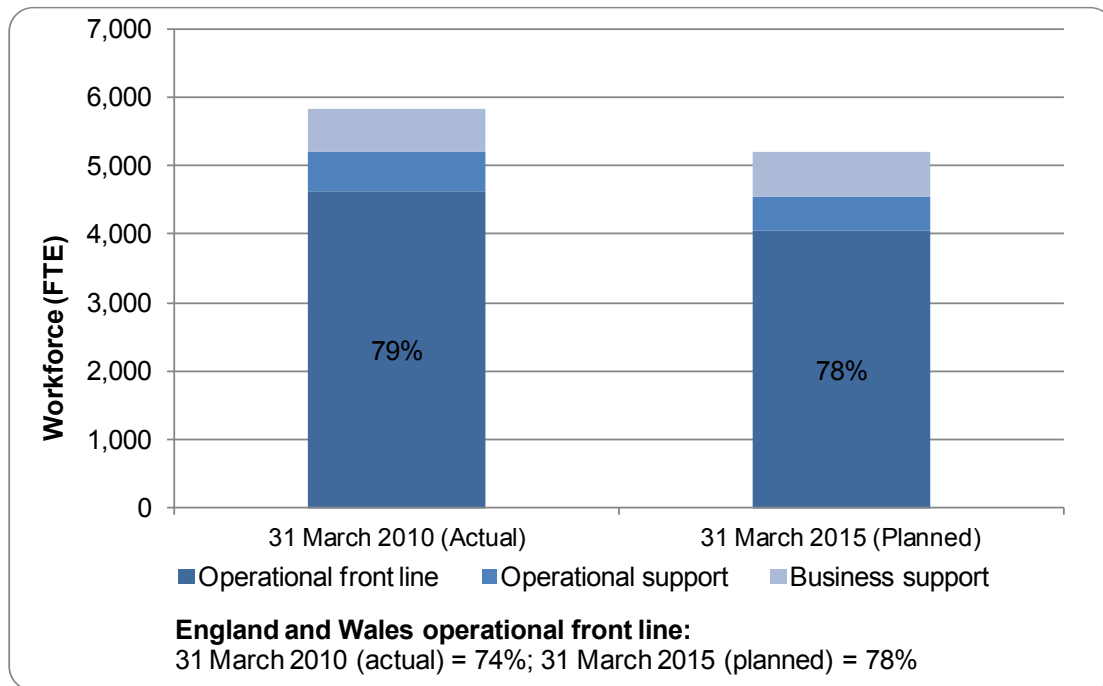
⁷ See *Adapting to Austerity*, HMIC, London, July 2011, p.13. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

⁸ Workforce figures for March 2010 show the actual number of people working for the force in permanent posts on the 31 March in that year. People on long-term absences (such as maternity leave) are included in these 'actual' figures, but vacant posts are not. Workforce projections for March 2015 are for budgeted posts, so the actual number of people who will be working for the force at that point in reality may be different, because some posts will be vacant or filled by temporary staff. Forces' projections may also exclude people who will be on long-term absences. The difference between actual workforce numbers and projected numbers should therefore be taken as an approximate expected change.

Changes to the proportion of workforce on the front line

HMIC defines the people who work on the police front line as: “those who are in everyday contact with the public and who directly intervene to keep people safe and enforce the law”. It is important that as forces reconfigure their structures and reduce workforce **numbers**, they focus on maintaining (or if possible increasing) the **proportion** of people in these crime-fighting roles.

The following chart shows the change in the workforce frontline profile in Devon and Cornwall Police.⁹



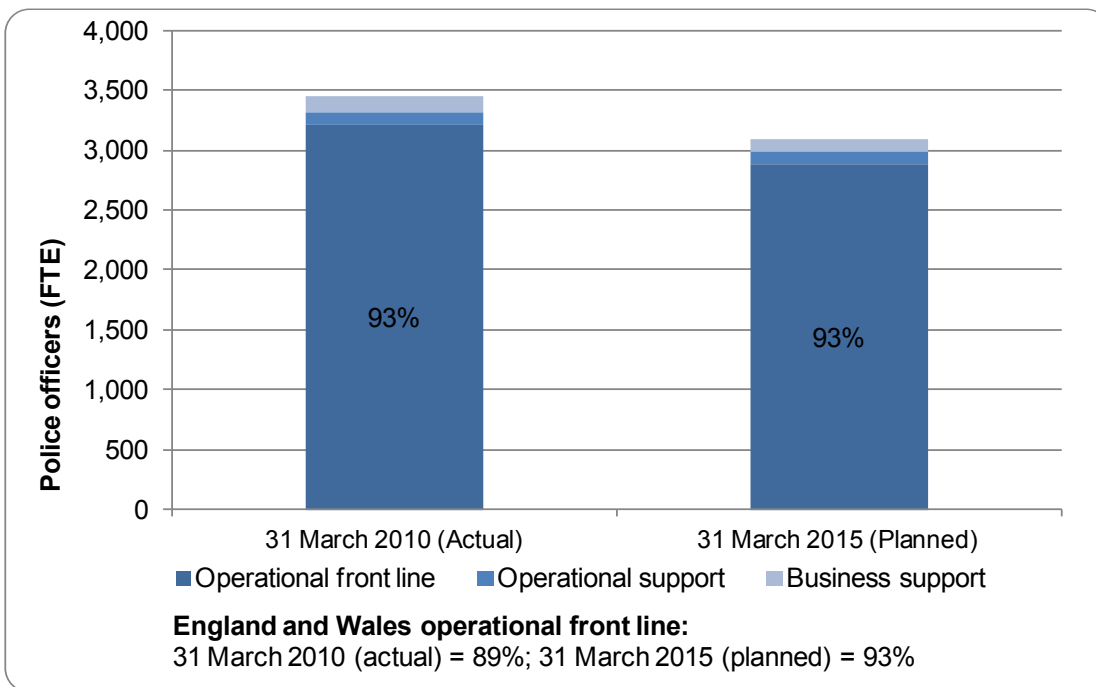
The **number** of officers, PCSOs and staff (i.e. of the force’s total workforce) working Devon and Cornwall’s front line is planned to reduce by 13% between March 2010 and March 2015 (from 4,621 to 4,037).

Over the same period, the **proportion** of the force’s total workforce allocated to frontline roles is planned to reduce from 79% to 78%. This compares with an overall increase across England and Wales from 74% to 78%.

The force reports that this expected reduction in the proportion of the workforce in front line roles is due to a number of police staff changes that have already taken place (since 2010). Reductions have been seen in police staff performing investigator roles and in a reduced number of police enquiry officers following a programme of station counter closures. However, the force continues to support its PCSO numbers in order to maintain its visible presence in communities.

⁹ From 2010, Gwent, the Metropolitan Police Service, Wiltshire and North Wales police forces chose to code those officers and staff who are on long-term absence from duty due to maternity/paternity leave, career break, full-time education or suspension, and those on long-term leave, to their normal working role. This has the effect of inflating their workforce and frontline figures by up to 1% compared to other forces.

The **number** of Devon and Cornwall’s police officers in frontline roles is planned to reduce by 10% from 3,207 in March 2010 to 2,866 in March 2015, as the following chart shows. The **proportion** of those remaining on the front line is planned to remain constant at 93%. This compares to an overall increase across England and Wales from 89% to 93%.



Collaboration

HMIC monitors a force’s progress on collaboration¹⁰ because it offers the opportunity to deliver efficient, effective policing and help achieve savings.

In 2014/15 the force expects to spend 2% of its total expenditure on collaboration, which is considerably lower than the 11% figure for England and Wales. Overall, collaboration is expected to contribute less than 1% of the force’s savings requirement, which is well below the 7% figure for England and Wales.

The force believes that its geography limits its attraction as an operational partner; however, the force is engaged with four forces in the south west region and is looking to establish closer working links and collaboration with other local public services, including councils, and the fire, ambulance and coastguard services.

The force has created a ‘peninsula strategic assessment’ along with its partners involved in community safety. The assessment has connected organisations on a level not achieved before and is the foundation of collaborative activity against key priorities. The force has also revised its arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable people and future proposals focuses on a joint response by agencies. However, at this stage, this and other partnership arrangements, are based on ‘memoranda of understanding’ rather than formal collaborative and shared savings agreements.

¹⁰ HMIC defines collaboration as “all activity where two or more parties work together to achieve a common goal, which includes inter force activity and collaboration with the public and private sectors, including outsourcing and business partnering”.

Managing change

Reductions in police budgets have inevitably led to a shrinking workforce. HMIC expects forces also to have an eye within their change programmes on the longer term transformation which can help maintain or improve the service they offer to the public and prepare for future funding reductions.

The force developed an ambitious programme of change to reshape the force into a new operating model with significantly fewer officers and staff. As HMIC reported last year the force expressed uncertainty about the long term viability of the approach and HMIC had concerns about the extent to which the vision for the force was shared amongst managers and staff.

Since then the force has reviewed and adjusted its operating model; reviewed and streamlined its change management approach; and brought in an experienced programme manager to support the management of the change programme. This gives HMIC increased confidence in the force's ability to respond to these budget reductions and better manage future change, although significant attention must be paid to communicating these changes to the workforce.

The force continues to be limited by poor quality, legacy ICT systems. Updating and improving these is a priority for the force and is included as part of the change programme.

How is the force engaging police officers, PCSOs and staff in the change programme?

The force conducts staff surveys every six months and addresses the matters raised through its leadership group. Focus groups also reported that the chief officer team were visible and sought out information on "what works" and what doesn't.

The leadership explained that the new operating model required a significant level of cultural change – reducing personal autonomy in some areas and increasing personal discretion in others – which was challenging. The force is supporting these changes in a number of ways, for example, inspectors are now being trained in management style and change practices to enable them to guide officers and staff through considerable further change.

Police officers' associations reported that they had good access to the chief officer team and were able to influence change. Police staff unions felt they were less well involved and were not consulted on the implementation of the operating structures and subsequent changes.

HMIC also interviewed a number of officers and staff who were unclear on the detail of the revised operating structures.

As the force continues to implement and develop change it should take the opportunity to review how it communicates and involves staff.

How effective has the response been?

Devon and Cornwall Police will deliver its planned savings by the end of 2014/15. The force still faces a significant challenge as it has lower than average funding and had started to make savings prior to the spending review period so would struggle to protect the frontline compared with other forces. While overall crime levels are low, the force is challenged by a large geographic area to police and significant increases in the population over the summer months.

Impact of the changes on the public

The challenge for forces is not just to save money and reduce their workforce numbers, but to ensure the choices they make in deciding how to achieve this do not have a negative impact on the service they provide to their communities. HMIC therefore looked for evidence that the force had kept a consideration of the effect on the public at the heart of their choices.

Visibility

The work done by police officers and staff in visible roles (such as officers who respond to 999 calls, deal with serious road traffic collisions or patrol in neighbourhoods) represents only a part of the policing picture. Chief constables need to allocate resources to many other functions in order to protect the public, such as counter terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child protection (to name just three).

That being said, research shows that the public value seeing visible police officers on patrol in the streets, and that those who see police in uniform at least once a week are more likely to have confidence in their local force.¹¹ HMIC therefore examined how far the changes being implemented by the force had affected the visibility of the police on the streets of Devon and Cornwall.

In March 2013, Devon and Cornwall Police allocated 48% of its police officers to visible roles. This is 13% lower than it allocated in 2010, and is lower than the figure for most other forces (which was 54% across England and Wales).

Police visibility is further enhanced by PCSOs who principally support community policing. Looking at the proportion of police officers and PCSOs, Devon and Cornwall Police allocated 54% to visible roles. This is 10% lower than it allocated in 2010 and is lower than the 59% figure for England and Wales.

The force workforce plan also includes the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) expectation that the number of special constables will increase by 200 over his term of office reaching an establishment figure of 800 by 2017. Special constables will fulfil specific community roles and be trained for that purpose as well as those already working in towns and cities policing the 'night time economy'.

HMIC conducted a survey¹² of the public across England and Wales to assess whether the public had noticed any difference in the way their area is being policed. Of those people surveyed in Devon and Cornwall, 9%¹³ said that they have seen a police officer more often than they had 12 months ago; this is broadly in line with the 13% average across all survey respondents in England and Wales.

11 See *Demanding Times*, HMIC, London, 2011. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

12 A YouGov survey was carried out during a four-week period during March 2013. Satisfaction and confidence surveys are also carried out at a national level by the Crime Survey of England and Wales. These use larger sample sizes and are carried out quarterly over a rolling-year period. Some forces also carry out their own surveys of the general public. More information can be found at www.crimesurvey.co.uk, www.hmic.gov.uk or from force websites..

13 ± 5%.

Of those people surveyed, 78%¹⁴ said they felt either as safe or safer in the areas where they live compared with two years ago. This is broadly in line with the figure for most other forces which is 75%.

Calls for service

HMIC examined whether police forces were taking longer to respond to calls for help, as a result of its workforce reductions and other changes designed to save money. Forces are not required to set response times or targets and are free to determine their own arrangements for monitoring attendance to calls, so information between forces is not comparable.

Devon and Cornwall Police set target response times in 2010/11¹⁵ for attending calls classed as 'emergency' (also known as grade 1) of within 15 minutes in an urban location and within 20 minutes in rural areas. The targets for 'priority' calls (also known as grade 2) were set as within 30 minutes in an urban location and within 45 minutes in a rural location. Since 2011/12, the 'priority' target time has changed to 60 minutes for all locations.

Over this period, the force met its target response time for 'emergency' calls 79% of the time in 2010/11, 80% of the time in 2011/12 and 72% of the time in 2012/13.

For 'priority' calls, the force met its target 74% of the time in 2010/2011, 73% of the time in 2011/12 and 70% of the time in 2012/13.

As can be seen the number of emergency and priority calls dealt with in target have been gradually declining over the last three years.

Crime

In 2010 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, set a clear priority for the police service to reduce crime.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (the first two years of the spending review) Devon and Cornwall Police reduced recorded crime (excluding fraud) by 2% compared to 13% in England and Wales. Compared to other forces, this was among the lowest reductions seen over the period. Over this period, victim-based crime (that is, crimes where there is a direct victim – an individual, a group, or an organisation) reduced by 2% compared with 12% in England and Wales.

By looking at how many crimes occur per head of population, we can see how safe it is for the public in that police area. The table below shows recorded crime and anti-social behaviour rates in Devon and Cornwall (per head of population) compared with the rest of England and Wales.

¹⁴ ± 5%.

¹⁵ We use 2010/11 as a baseline to show response times prior to the Spending Review period.

12 months to March 2013	Rate per 1,000 population in Devon and Cornwall	England and Wales rate per 1,000 population
Crimes (excluding fraud)	49.9	61.4
Victim based crime	43.2	54.5
Burglary	4.9	8.2
Violence against the person	11.7	10.6
Anti-social behaviour incidents	27.7	40.7

It is important that crimes are effectively investigated and the perpetrator identified and brought to justice. When sufficient evidence is available to say who has committed a crime, it can be described as detected.

The force's sanction detection¹⁶ rate (for crimes excluding fraud) for the 12 months to March 2013 is 25.8%. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales sanction detection rate of 27.0%.

We have chosen these types of crime to give an indication of offending levels in Devon and Cornwall. For information on the frequency of other kinds of crimes in your area, go to www.hmic.gov.uk/crime-and-policing-comparator.

Victim satisfaction surveys

An important measure on the impact of changes to service delivery for the public is how satisfied victims are with the overall service they receive when they seek police assistance.

In the 12 months to March 2013, 84.4%¹⁷ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by Devon and Cornwall Police. This is broadly in line with the England and Wales figure of 84.6%¹⁸.

Changes to how the public can access services

Forces are exploring different ways in which the public can access policing services. Devon and Cornwall Police closed 36 front counters¹⁹ in 2011 and is planning to close 14 police stations between 2010 and 2015. The force is planning to open one additional shared access point during the same period.

¹⁶ A sanction detection is a 'solved crime' where a suspect has been identified and notified as being responsible for committing that crime and what the full implications of this are, and has received an official sanction. Official sanctions include charges, cautions, penalty notices, offences taken into consideration (TICs) and cannabis warnings.

¹⁷ ± 1.6%.

¹⁸ ± 0.2%.

¹⁹ A police building open to the general public to obtain face-to-face access to police services.

However, they are making more use of the internet and social media to communicate with the public, and developing different mechanisms for the public to contact the police. Devon and Cornwall Police has taken a number of steps:

- the force has updated and launched its new website which provides detailed information on contacting police locally or by 999 and 101;
- the contact management unit was experiencing difficulty in managing the demand placed on it from 101 calls. The force has increased the number of staff posts which has led to an improvement in the time taken to answer telephone calls from the public; and
- the PCC will conduct a review of the 101 service during this year to ensure it meets the requirements of the public.

Conclusion

Devon and Cornwall faces a more difficult challenge as it has lower than average funding and had to make savings prior to the spending review period so would struggle to protect the frontline compared with other forces. While overall crime levels are low, the force is challenged by a large geographic area to police and significant increases in the population over the summer months.

Last year, HMIC reported that the force was at risk of not delivering an efficient and effective police service to the public. Since then the force has made good progress in meeting its financial challenge and has developed a detailed change programme which will allow it to reduce costs while continuing to fight crime. However, the level of savings it can find from non-pay is reducing significantly with future savings more likely to come from the pay budget.

The force has altered structures that were not delivering for the public and improved performance. There is still work to do, in particular ensuring that the further changes are clearly communicated to the workforce and that the significant cultural change the force has to undergo is addressed. However, the force understands what further work needs to be done and is in a much stronger place to manage further spending reductions.

In October 2010, the Government announced that central funding to the Police Service in England and Wales would reduce by 20% in the four years between March 2011 and March 2015.

HMIC's Valuing the Police Programme has tracked how forces are planning to make savings to meet this budget demand each year since summer 2011. This report identifies what we found in this third year.

Our inspection focused on three questions:

1. How is the force responding to the budget reduction?
2. What is the impact for the workforce and the public?
3. How is the force managing current and future risks?

To answer these questions, we collected data and plans from forces, surveyed the public to see if they had noticed any changes in the service they receive from the police as a result of the cuts, and conducted in-force inspections. We also interviewed the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the chief officer leads for finance, change, human resources and performance in each force, and held focus groups with staff and other officers.

National findings and patterns across all 43 forces are given in our thematic report, *Policing in Austerity: Rising to the Challenge*, which is available from www.hmic.gov.uk.

This report provides the findings for Devon and Cornwall Police.